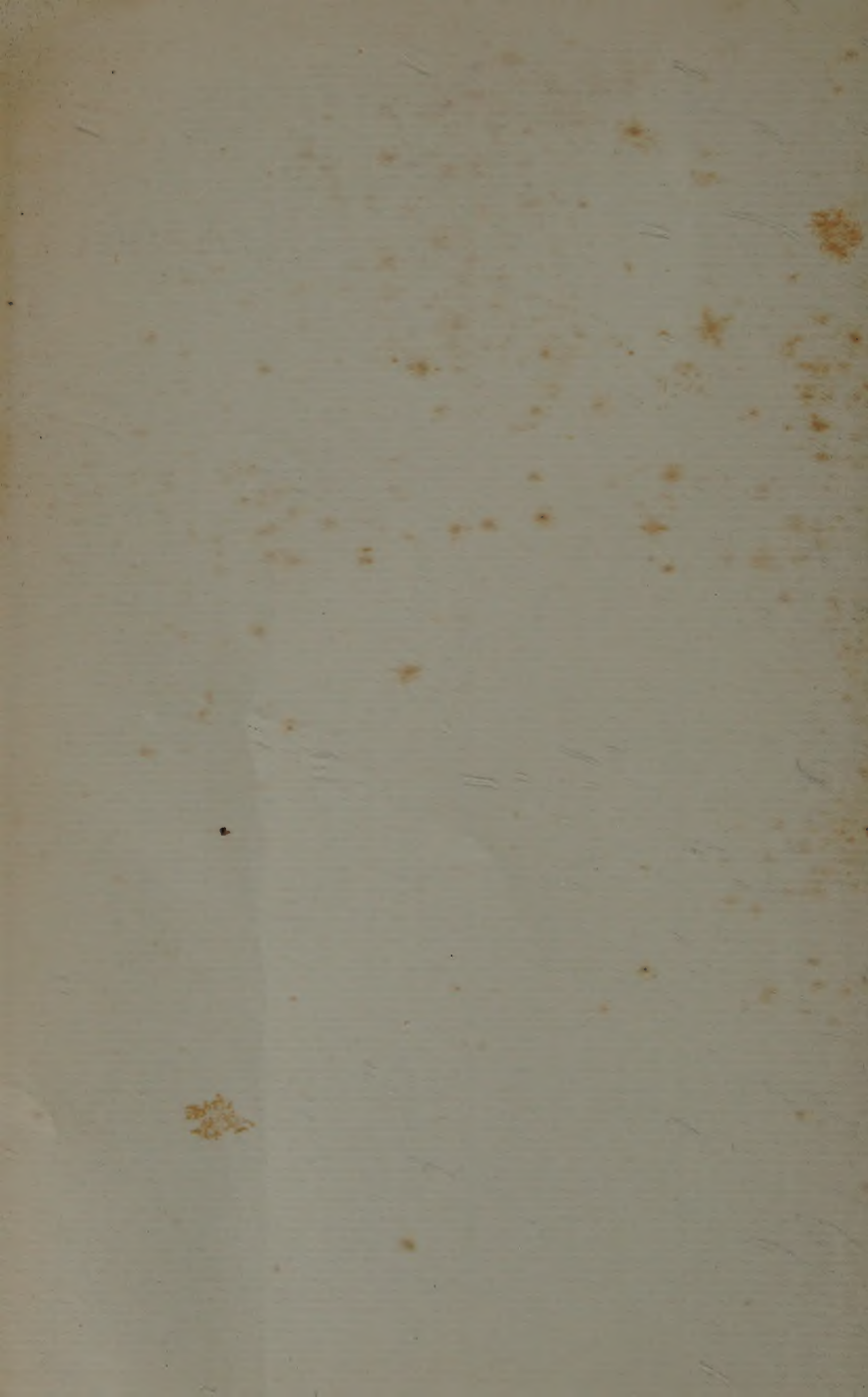


Sz. la.

Jan

5612/8

Theodore



THE LABURNUM BRANCH

THE
LABURNUM BRANCH
POEMS

By NAOMI MITCHISON



JONATHAN CAPE LIMITED
THIRTY BEDFORD SQUARE LONDON

FIRST PUBLISHED IN MCMXXVI
MADE & PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY BUTLER & TANNER LTD
FROM AND
LONDON



CONTENTS

	PAGE
DEDICATION	9
I. POEMS ABOUT PEOPLE	
SAVERNAKE FOREST	13
'MY TRUE LOVE HATH MY HEART'	14
FOR COISHA	15
THE CAMP IN THE ORCHARD	17
'GIVE PEACE IN OUR TIME, O LORD'	18
A HISTORY LESSON WITH CRYSTAL	19
'HERE'S A COUPLE TO MARRY IN JOY'	19
POSTSCRIPT TO A CONVERSATION	20
LIZ	20
IN HAMMERSMITH	21
WOMAN AT A PARTY	22
FOUR PLATONISTS IN A MOONSHINE	22
'WHEN YOU ARE UNHAPPY . . .'	24
DON CITROËN	24
STELLA BENSON	27
MRS. HALDANE OF CLOAN	27
II. BIRTH POEM	
BIRTH POEM	31
III. POEMS ABOUT PLACES	
COUNTRIES AND SEASONS	37
GAUL	38
SARAJEVO	39
FRANCE TO TUNISIA	40
ITALY AGAIN	41
RAVENNA	41
ACROSS EUROPE	45
SCOTLAND	47

	PAGE
IRELAND	47
LONDON	49
SWIMMING IN THE THAMES, OFF HAMMERSMITH, WITH ISOBEL POWYS	50
TWO MORE FRENCH TOWNS	50
SPAIN	51
WINCHESTER	52

IV. THE REID HACKLE

THE REID HACKLE	57
THE WIDOW	58
GREEN BOUGHS	59
IN LONDON	60
'WE HAVE NOT QUARRELLED WITH THE GERMAN PEOPLE' - PRES. WILSON	61
LAMENT	62
SPRING 1918	62

V. TIME TRAVELLING

THE ROAD TO ROME	67
AINORIX IN THE MARKET	67
BARBARIANS IN ROME	69
THE STRANGER IN THE TEMPLE	70
THE TORCHES OF MITHRAS	72
VERCINGETORIX IN ALESIA	73
AN ARVERNIAN LOOKS AT THE SACRED MOUNTAIN AND REMEMBERS VERCINGETORIX	75

VI. PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG GIRL GROWING UP

SITTING OUT	79
THE PROPOSAL	80
AUTUMN	81
STORM AT NIGHT	81
PROTHALAMION	82
TORQUATA PARVULA	83

	PAGE
VII. THINGS, IMAGES, AND POLITICS	
ON TAKING A T'ANG HORSE FROM HAMMERSMITH TO THE CITY	87
THE POOR BRIDE	87
FORBIDDEN	89
TWO MEN AND A GIRL	90
INTOLERANCE	91
THE LEADER	91
PEACE	92
THREE LAMBS	93
TOO LATE	97

VIII. SOMEWHERE IN MY MIND	
SOMEWHERE IN MY MIND	101
THE GARDENS	102
THE MIRROR AND THE CLOCK	103
TIME	105
I HAVE GOTTEN CLAY	105

IX. SONGS	
SONG OF THE GUARD ON THE SNOW-LINE	109
GARRY FAIRIES	110
SUNDAY MORNING	110
MAGIC OF THINGS	112

*

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

A few of these poems originally appeared in *The Westminster*, *The Weekly Westminster*, *The London Mercury*, *The Strathearn Herald*, *The Cambridge Magazine*, *Oxford Poetry* (1916), *The New Statesman*, *The Varsity*, and I am indebted to the editors for permission to reprint them here. — N. M.

DEDICATION

TO MARGERY AND DOMINICK SPRING-RICE

IF you go picking laburnum branches,
You must take great care,
Or some one will come and strip all the little, lovely,
tasseling twigs,
And fit them into a respectable vase.
Or if you have a plate all over patterns
From China or Italy,
Some one will brush against it and knock it over:
Smashed.
But between us four
Blossoms for ever the laburnum,
And the pattern stays on the plate.
Do not be afraid!
For these are real: the others are only shows,
Made once, to perish.
But our laburnum
Stays thick and golden with the flowers of friendship,
And our plate is whole and round,
And the pattern on it
Is always beautiful.

I
POEMS ABOUT PEOPLE

SAVERNAKE FOREST

οὐ ταῦτα πάντα ἐπαφρόδιτα ;

THE moon is rising
On a warm night,
Early in June.

Oh, clear and white
Between the beeches!
And we go walking,
And the quiet moon
About us reaches
Her web of love.

And little talking
For us four lovers,
But on and on,
And two by two,
We walk the miles
Of the forest through.

But sometimes staying
On the leaf and moss ways
Between the tree trunks,
Where paths go cross-ways,
In our midnighting;
Or all delaying
Where one has seen
A glow-worm lighting
His lamp of green.

Or else change couples,
And hand in hand
We still go straying.
And against the moon
In glowing blackness
The beech boughs stand.
And still and soon
Go by the hours
On their owl-soft wings
Across the forest.

And all these things
Are under the grace
Of Aphrodite
Of the fair face.

* * *

‘MY TRUE LOVE HATH MY HEART’

How can I write about you
When you are all the world?
When I know
That all that is good or just in me is only
An echo of you:
When all that I think is what you have breathed on my
heart:

And all I say,
Although I am praised for it,
Is your book read aloud.

FOR COISHA

THE old ones have got all round you,
Biting at you, clinging to you
With strong sticky arms that have bound you
To their ideas of right.
You must hear no voices singing to you
In the bitter night.
Why need you listen to them, why owe them duties?
You have paid those bearing-pains with the tenderness
of youth,
Surely your life can become at last your own!
Dear, you must fight now, fight for your own loves and
beauties.
This is a hard thing, fighting oldest friends and old
kin,
And if you lose, you have lost your soul and your own
young truth,
You must leave unharvested ever the corn you have sown.
And yet, if you win,
Something lovely is broken, something that has been
dear.

Friends should be kinder than mothers,
Stronger than fathers, truer
Than those older, those others
Can ever be to you, dearer

Than old paths through lost oak woods
With the winter robin piping,
When you were the only hearer.

We two have walked together
On high downs. We have smelt
The whin behind the sea-mist. We have seen
From above the changing English weather,
Grey sea lighted to green.
We have felt
All each others deepest heart-beats,
Talking of time past,
Friends lost or dead,
Or of things we hoped might happen,
Peace coming at last,
And words that must be said,
Leaders we knew would come
To free women, to free
All the sorry and dumb!
And the breeze ruffled the sea
— Salt air and primroses —
And on the top of the Island
The long ridges lay bare,
And behind them the copses stirred
With wild briar and hawthorn
And every kind of bird,
Sea birds and marsh birds and land birds.

Why do they say they love you and then hurt you,
These old ones, these others, understanding nothing?
Looking wise and far-seeing, standing firm on their virtue,
Bruising your delicate loves with their harsh, immovable
thoughts,
Putting things and ideas before people, the live stuff of
all dreams –
Like solid Gods fixed in their square, stony courts.
Your throat is bared to their altars, your blood steams!
O my white one, my dear, come away from it, do not lie
there like a lamb,
Come away!
Come to us who have felt it too – we too have known,
We have fought and hurt and been hurt, we have worked
and sung,
We have looked for the day.
We too have been all alone.
Turn to your friends, come away, come back to the
young!

* * *

THE CAMP IN THE ORCHARD

How gentle it is, three friends talking at evening,
And the many voices of the stream softly calling,
And the walnut tree above them with its leaves quiet,
And beyond the hawthorn hedge, the night falling.
And an elder thick with pale, sweet flowers, and by it
One of them lying, hands under head, half undressed,

And one by the pond, feet bare to the cool grasses,
And the third, a blanket round him, but not yet dreaming,
All speaking low, with words less heard than guessed.
As they lie there, happy and still, time passes and passes:
Now it is midnight and the thin dew settles
Un-noticed on their hair, and the sky is gleaming
Very faintly from clouds hiding a universe of stars.
Behind them the empty orchard, hay and white nettles:
And the noise of each one stirring is sweet to his friend.
This at least is real and for ever, this has no waking or end
Like the unsubstantial cattle of our dreams that fly . . .

* * *

‘GIVE PEACE IN OUR TIME, O LORD’

To Gerald Heard

IF we found the coreless apple,
If we took the sting from love
– You were saying –
And the game we all are playing
Just grew simple,
And the tired spirit, laying
By its arrows, could find rest in the Belovéd –
If this cruel, age-long tangle,
All this dark and sweating jangle
Of the warring he and she ways,
Were untwisted,

Aphrodite might stay smiling in her sea ways,
Only marking
How her wave-crests swung unmisted
In the morning,
In the clear, Hellenic morning. . . .

* * *

A HISTORY LESSON WITH CRYSTAL

THE wild anemones,
The pale ones, in the hazel woods,
Have a certain grace that is not wholly of flowers,
But springs from the human mind.
And so you:
When we are talking about ancient history,
There is a sympathy between us
That is not quite of knowledge,
But of life keener in you than in other children,
So that my older life
Leaps out to mix with it.

* * *

'HERE'S A COUPLE TO MARRY IN JOY'

YOU from Hellas, oh you two!
On the mountain falls the dew,
Down the valley leaps the hare,
Lo, the Kouros waits you there.

May the God that guards you well
Make things fall that once befell,
When all joys were his to give:
Let you live as now you live,
Laugh and love and work and play,
And speak the truth from day to day.

* * *

POSTSCRIPT TO A CONVERSATION

WHAT I meant to tell you
Is that I am partly a boy.
I do not feel towards you
Like a modern woman
– Whatever she is –
But like some young Hellene,
Like the boy Charmides
Towards his friend.

* * *

L I Z

WHAT are you like, sitting there?
You are like a bird.
Something in a hedge, bright-breasted,
A wing that stirred . . .
And out there came, small and crested,

A darting, rare
Sussex finch: so we stayed by it, glancing,
While up from its throat
A song, oh so sweet, would come dancing!

Now you: perching up on your chair
By the table, while ever the damp night
Presses round us, and in from it float
Great moths on their runways of air.
And look what I wrote
While you argued there in the lamp light!

* * *

IN HAMMERSMITH

I THOUGHT you meant to make love to me.
I didn't want you to really,
I wanted to stop you.
But if, in spite of all I could do, you had -
Oh, I don't know .
But now I think I was wrong,
I am ashamed:
You never meant it.
But most of all I am glad,
For now something will happen,
Something will flower between us:
I can look into your world

Which is new and beautiful,
And you into mine.
And the crystal shall never be broken
By the hoof of the Black Horse!

* * *

WOMAN AT A PARTY

(From the Greek)

WHEN I see you, I hate you so much
That my belly aches,
My bowels move with passion:
Rich woman!
I wish there was going to be a revolution,
You ought to be properly raped
And then strung up to a lamp-post.

* * *

FOUR PLATONISTS IN A MOONSHINE

ALL the time,
All the time we can feel
The cold sea air,
Damp and a little sweet
From over the flowering fields,
And the dew heavily soaking
From the boughs onto our hair,

And onto our pale feet
Out of the grasses.
We believe that love is a Good.
We can see the slow, beautiful flash
As the beam of the lighthouse passes
Across the far wood.

Away below
The sea wrinkles against the cliff.
We are walking softly and slow
Because of our full hearts.
And now the moon rises, as if
The whole wood were on fire:
And the black pine mass parts
Into glow and outline.
We are beginning to drink
All this mad moonshine
As the thing presses, higher
Out of the pine trees,
A great, round clot of silver!
Oh, I can think
Of other people watching:
On ships, in level seas,
In Italy,
In Berkshire among the beech woods,
And all the rest . . .
Moon rising and sun setting . . .
But we watch it best!

You with your short sight,
Frowning and smiling and sweating,
And you, your hair long and soft and full of light,
Oh softer than mine!
And you, your face is dark
But your eyes shine,
And your white teeth where you are smiling at the full
moon.

* * *

‘WHEN YOU ARE UNHAPPY...’

WHEN you are unhappy
I feel like your big sister,
Much older,
Much stronger than you.
Oh my darling,
Your soft hair loose on my breast . . .

* * *

DON CITROËN

How I remember that autumn morning,
Seven o’clock, and I, just waking,
Saw the sea clouds over the hill
Piled and pink, and the sun was breaking
Out into clear and night-washed blue.

All the garden was pale and still,
All the grasses heavy with dew;
The sound of the waves was a gentle blur
On the high, sharp cries of birds in the hedge,
Up where the thorn and brambles meet.
Cold it was for my hands on the edge
Of the thick brown blanket's breath-damp fur.
Blinking, blinking, I heard your feet
Quick on the gravel, and turned and saw
How your eyes were bright and awake.

This is the way for dreams to break –
Into the air one jumps and rouses,
Shoving the blankets off and down,
Not like people who sleep in houses,
Not like waking in any town!
Country dressing takes less than no time
– Bare feet kicked into salt-cracked shoes –
Plaiting of hair 's the only slow time !
All the children were still asleep,
Up the stairs with their windows wide,
They'd no stolen hour to lose.
I took my breakfast in both hands, running
Up the path with the early shadows
Scarcely yet beginning to creep
Long and wet from the hedge's side.
Only the tops of the pines were sunning
Deep green boughs in the golden dawn!

When I saw I began to shout
Tumbling, singing words to it – so did
All the birds for a mile about:
Sang so hard that one couldn't tell
Whether bread was better than peaches!

There you stood with the car just loaded.
I brought breakfast for you as well,
Bread and peaches . . . last night you kissed me.
Now, if I'd stayed, would you not have missed me,
Started the car, and gone, and left me
Sore and sad in the dawn without you?
There's the truth of what I was thinking,
Yet, remembering, why need I doubt you,
Give myself constancy, leave you none?

So, we got off, and there was the sun
Right in our eyes, and dazzling, blinking,
In and out of the pines in the wood!
All the uplands were mad with light
As we found our way through the empty by-roads;
How I remember that morning still!
Farms and ponds and the slope of a hill,
Twisting lanes in the beeches' shade,
Cold with a breath of lingering night,
Village and church, and then two high-roads,
And the house in the trees with the mossy gravel:
These are matted and pressed together

- No loose tags for mind to unravel -
Into a frame of space and time,
With the little car and the autumn weather
And the engine trying to make it rhyme . . .

* * *

STELLA BENSON

FOR seven years,
Oh, seven years, princess!
I have thought about you - pictured you.
And now you are here:
Green cloak and silver flowers.
Oh you pale fairy,
Have I no power to bind you to me now?

* * *

MRS. HALDANE OF CLOAN

'O grave, where is thy victory?'

How green the fields are,
How golden the broom,
How fine the lilies smelt
In that packed room!

You should have trumpets now,
And riders to ride,

Like the trumpets and white robed ones
That came to Christian
On that other side.

In the red-wheeled lorries
Go strong, brown horses,
That step their courses
And bear you along.
On the stretching road-way
Horsehoofs and footsteps
Make a quiet song.

The birds sing shrill
Out of the beeches.
Grey smoke and brown smoke
And mists hang still
Over the lowlands.
And down the hill
And across the hollow,
House folk and town folk
And farm folk follow.

In the Scottish houses, the blinds are all down;
You go like a Queen through the whole long town.
They have seen you and known you, in your works and
your ways:
Their lives have shown you they have given you praise.
Rain on the pavement now, and rain in the sky,
But they come out bare-headed to watch you go by.

II
BIRTH POEM

BIRTH POEM

(*Thursday, March 26, 1925*)

STILL, still, the room is the same,
The lighted room:
The warm leap of the flame,
The white curtains and walls,
And the smell of flowers:
All just as yesterday.

It must be very late,
And for her – all these hours.
One begins to shiver and shiver,
Waiting till somebody calls . . .
Outside, starlight and no moon
Over the Mall and the quiet river.
Oh, my friend, it will happen soon!
You must wait.

Now she is still and free
In the deepest possible sleep;
Pain has turned into glow
And glow has been drowned in deep
Marvellous bodilessness.

I know.

I have been there too,
When the world is bursting with pain,
But at last they take it away
And darkness falls like rain

On the very depths of you.
Oh, believe me! Some time she will say
It is true.

But the room waits,
And the flowers and the plates,
And the pictures on the wall
— Why will nobody call? —
And the tables and the chairs.
But none of them are real:
Because of the Thing upstairs
That has sucked the Life from them,
When it took her,
It took your wife from them
And left them hollow.
We are the three shepherds
With no star to follow
But the queer echo of danger;
We have come to the forlorn
House and the empty manger,
And the babe not yet born.

Oh, let us talk about something,
Let us talk about Art!
We would tell millions of lies
To help that ache in your heart,
That strain in your eyes.
Could we talk about country mornings
And how the fairies come

And the first dew is falling?
Oh, why do you make us dumb,
And what is the thing we fear?
Still, still, it goes on.
Oh, my dear –
Some one is calling.

.
Time is not real, time is a thing of the mind,
Yet will not go as we wish, and is not kind:
Joy races the clock, and love goes fleeting away,
But pain lasts for ever, and bad times stay and stay.

Out of Pandora's box, hope came latest of all,
After the many evils that Themis bade to fall
On the sons of men, unlucky, but hope was there at the end:
Oh aching, oh divine one, let us look to thee for our
friend!

.
Come down,
Come down and tell us,
You with your face bright,
Your eyes burning!
Oh, have you seen a great light
And the dome of heaven turning?
Oh, is it all right?

Your son is born.
And you are changed, you are filled
With gladness and mystery,

And all the terror ends
And the straining heart is stilled.
Go up to your babe and your joy,
This new, strange thing to see:
Go back to your boy!
And take the love of your friends.

We will go into the hall, carefully shutting the door,
Doing all things rightly, keeping the omens good.
I have never heard the new-born crying before,
An angry, tiny bird, lost in a thick wood.
I was always stilled as she is when my sons cried,
Deep drowned in chloroform and that sleep's flood tide.

Good night, good luck: and so
Out of the house with us!
Into the night we go –
What shall we do with our news?
Isn't there somewhere to shout it?
Shall we knock up these sleepy houses
And tell them all about it?
Oh how those stars do stare
And the street lamps all in a row,
As if they knew what we know!

And now, look back: now, all goes well up there,
Those three high windows where the gleam of light is.
How still about our heads this star-lit air,
How clear the night is!

III

POEMS ABOUT PLACES

COUNTRIES AND SEASONS

Early Spring: Denmark

THE lark springs out of the plough!

1 The roofs a-glitter with sun!

And all around, for miles and miles, sheds, flag-poles,
lakes, woods, arms of the sea,

And jolly yellow-haired Danes in lime-washed farm-
houses!

Late Spring: Holland

Wide, grassy polders;

Flag-edged, brimming ditches;

Made land, thick crops, pruned trees, fat cattle, flowers,

Clean streets and barges.

Summer: Belgium

Barley, lucerne, beans, rye;

The sweating, prospering peasants;

The high, red houses, with curved Flemish gables;

Hot roads and thunder.

Autumn: North Italy

The cultivated land,

The flat, white houses,

The pattern of the vines among the fields

In wet October.

Winter: England – Kent

Hedges and fields, orchards and villages,
Small hills and gardens,
Funny and bare and tangled.
Somehow, one's own.

Late Spring: Upper Thames

Nothing but hay, and a few steers, and some old thorn
trees,
And buttercups, and water dock, and rushes,
And no stacks, no houses, not a man on all this land
Where prosperous folk kept sheep in the thirteenth
century.

* * *

GAUL

Les Laumes – Alesia

WHEN one gets to the junction
It is nearly dusk;
And then one passes Alesia.
The ghosts – ah the ghosts fighting on the hill!

Clermont Ferrand

Supposing he came alive in a night of thunder and
lightning –
Vercingetorix in Clermont Ferrand!
Walking about the Place Jaudes,

In and out of the cafés,
Laughing at the Credit Lyonnais,
Laughing at his own statue,
Till dawn comes . . .

Gergovia

Long piles of black, hewn stones,
Barley fields on Gergovia,
Over their City. And woods of walnut and cherry,
Hundreds of thousands of cherries dropping from the
Arvernian trees.

* * *

S A R A J E V O

I

R AIN in the streets. And a Serbian soldier
Riding past between cloud and sunshine,
Like a folk-tale hero
Look for lost princesses.

II

Long strings of pack ponies
Trail up the hill-side
Blue-starred with chicory flowers,
A veiled woman riding one.

* * *

FRANCE TO TUNISIA

Marseilles

I HAVE been walking up and down the Cannebière
For at least half an hour:

What a lovely smell of oysters!

I ask you, look at the sun: one would know one was
well south.

Tunis

At last, we arrive!

See, there is an Arab sitting on the jetée.

One wonders if he is stuffed. No! He moves.

My god, how he is dirty.

Kairouan

But tell the guide

That in England we have two Holy Cities:

Oxford and Cambridge.

Sbeitla

This is the windiest place in the whole world.

The wind has blown down temples and churches,

Arches, pillars, and streets of Roman houses,

And buried them in the sand.

* * *

ITALY AGAIN

Venice

WE wanted to go to Greece,
But Mussolini,
Among other things . . .
Has stopped us . . .
And made Venice ugly.
How can I look at Saint Mark's
With my mind full of the straight white columns of the
Parthenon?

Ferrara

They have drained the marshes,
The fever is going;
They have built new houses,
They are reading new books,
Oh look, it is all coming alive again!

* * *

RAVENNA

MIDNIGHT in Ravenna:
The cafés are shut.
And all the nowadays people
Are put away in their boxes,
Sleeping . . .
But suppose one was there.

The Empress Theodora
Looked at me coldly
Out of her long, pale face.
She said: 'Young woman,'
(Duchess to kitchen-maid)
'Young woman, you came to Our church this morning,
And stared at Us,
Most impertinently.
Your dress is indecent, you are uncivilized, We have
never heard

Of the country you come from:
We doubt if it exists.
Further:
We have honoured Ravenna with Our presence
For fourteen centuries.
And shall continue to do so
When you are dead and utterly forgotten:
The Lord being not unmindful of his lambs.'
And she swept away,
With a rustling of stiff silk
And a glittering of hard gold.

But the little pretty one,
With the white veil,
The little lady who is always just not laughing,
Came up and whispered to me:
'Don't mind her!
She's jealous, she always is,

Of anyone under thirty,
Silly old cat!
She's lost any looks she *did* have,
And as to her skin —!
How many lovers have you got?
Can you do *this*?
You know who I am, don't you?
I'm Mrs. Belisarius.
Oh we were great friends once upon a time,
Theodora and me.
But I can't somehow forget
How she killed me afterwards:
Ooh, it did hurt!
And she wriggled her pretty shoulders
As she went off,
And one of the courtiers threw her a ripe fig,
Which she caught very cleverly
In one hand.

But Galla Placidia,
Poor dear ghost,
Said to me: 'Oh I'm so glad you liked my little chapel!
I took such pains over it.
And the Good Shepherd:
Isn't He sweet?
You know, I'd be so happy
If only my dear husband could see it.
I built it thinking of him.'

'The pine woods are lovely now,
All full of flowers and berries and moths and star light.
The lovers go whispering there,
Two and two,
In the soft scent of the pines.
But I can't go there,
Not all alone.
You see, he must have got tired waiting for me,
So he went away,
My Wulf.
I tried to find him once, I tried to follow him,
I went north as far as the Alps;
But it got so cold.
And I don't know where he is,
I can't find him,
He's gone.
We had such a difficult life,
Here and there,
In the middle of all the politics.
I thought we might settle down once we were dead,
And be happy together.
I did so want to be happy.'

'Sometimes inside my chapel
I sit and think to myself
That he's just coming.
But he never is.
And oh, it's harder not to be happy dead than alive!'

ACROSS EUROPE

German Frontier Post on the Salzburg Road

ON each side,
Pine forests climb right up to the sky,
And a double rainbow low over the road:
Oh land of fairy tales!

Linz

Grey-green and deep and wide and very rapid,
Ice-cold from glaciers in the high Alps.
We stand at last on the bank of the Donau,
Cradle of the Goths.

Schönbrunn

And it rained, and it rained
On those mostly empty cages in the Tier-Garten,
And the grey lakes and paths, and the chipped stone-
work,
And it dripped
From the trees,
In all the clipped, wet, matted, alleys of the Schönbrunn.

Northern Hungary

The thin crops patching the plain,
The long mud villages,
White geese and grey geese, hundreds of flocks of geese,
And a belled filly dancing over the road!

Strbske Pleso

Come and walk with me
Through the flowering woods, the pine, the larch, the
scattered rowan,
Never out of hearing
Of some clear, rushing stream,
Never out of sight
Of some high, sunny, lonely peak between us and Poland.

Krakau

I

In the moonlight
The still air swells with fantastic shapes of buildings,
Churches and towers budding into the sky.
Eastwards . . . eastwards . . .

II

There are so many dead kings,
And live Jews,
And monks and nuns and soldiers; and filth in the streets.
But what is Poland?

Brno

Go through the dullest part of the town
To a dullish square,
With a plain, red church and a big, railed cabbage
garden,
And lay your wreath
At the stone feet of Mendel!

Hildesheim

Under the high, beautiful, jutting houses,
All carved and gilded by long dead master craftsmen,
They pass up and down, up and down, and look at one
With sullen eyes. . . .

* * *

SCOTLAND

At the head of the glen of beeches stands Castle
Campbell,
And above Castle Campbell
The mists come down from the hills.
Three hundred years ago
My people burnt Castle Campbell,
And now I am taking my English sons to see.

* * *

IRELAND

I

SINCE dawn it has been raining in Dublin,
Softly and steadily:
Let us go and look at some pictures . . .
But, you know,
It is not only the little things,
Not only the black shawls and the poverty,
Not only the queer names,
And the green pillar boxes:

But it is all quite different,
As different as Vienna.
It is more serious than one thought;
It is very serious.
It seems to be a Nation.

II

The great squares misted with green,
The pale colours of Dublin
Clear and soft in the evening sunshine . . .
But suppose one had taken all one's ideas out of books,
James Joyce or George Moore, and a few plays and a
little twilight –
And then one was set to look at the real city,
The hardness of seeing it at all!
People and talk, masking it, laughing, hiding
Something that's yet inherent behind faces and words:
Dublin as a unity,
Dublin as a capital,
Ireland as a Queen crowned, and at the end of it,
Knowing one can be friends!

Valencia Island

Stony and wet, the hill-side
Falls sharply to rough pasture, cliffs, and a grey, misted
sea,
And far out, over the waves, far out,
Shadows of headlands and islands.

LONDON

Hammersmith to Chiswick

THIS is my house,
And these are friends' houses,
And some belong to people I don't know.
But the owl in the elm tree,
And the herons and the barges and the high tides,
Belong to all of us.

Gower Street – Bedford Square – Gerrard Street

The day my first book was taken,
I ran all the way from here to Birrell and Garnett's,
Dodging the crossings, in and out of the traffic,
Mad drunk!
So now the pavements are still a little golden,
The streets still faintly full of stars and roses and
flags,
And Mr. Garnett terrifying and charming,
And Mr. Cape ever so polite –
Only he must have seen
How I was just dancing out of myself with sheer
pleasure!

* *
 *
 *

SWIMMING IN THE THAMES, OFF
HAMMERSMITH, WITH ISOBEL POWYS

IF you were in Hellas now,
Eurotas would be dry,
Only a stone scar, white and baking
In the sun heat of July;
And in the middle you'd see
The great river of Sparta
Barely up to your knee:
And the air hot and shaking . . .
But here is our windy Thames,
Right through the heart of the town:
All that rocking and mud-brown water
Goes tearing up and down
With waves that are cold and strong;
And the tide sets up from Putney
Bearing the swimmer along
On its breast, a small, strong daughter . . .

* * *

TWO MORE FRENCH TOWNS

Dijon

ALL round on the sides of the hills, in the hot, stony,
beautiful vineyards,
Here in the damp, candle-lit, honey-sweet vaults,
Waiting:
All that joy for mankind.

Albi

On a warm, heavy evening,
We go through wide markets and narrow streets
To a marvellous, secular, turreted cathedral,
Built very high and smooth of rose-red bricks.
Rose red . . . blood-red . . .
Soaked up from foundations wet with blood of the
Albigeois.

* * *

SPAIN

Rio Galega

IN a hollow of dry, yellow hills,
Trimmed green with box or grey with lavender,
A lonely river curves,
Opaque and heavy with mud,
Among mud islands, slowly.
The road curves with it.

Between Zaragoza and Burgos

The wind blows over the Sierras
Blinding in sun and bitter cold in shade.
The rivers have sunk and dried into deep, crooked
gulleys,
And the sweet, thorned herbs cannot even cover the
bare, yellow soil.

* * *

WINCHESTER

(To Dick and Cecil Gleadowe)

THE syringa bush in your garden,
And the lime trees everywhere,
They smell so sharp, so sweet, so sweet,
Dropping through the still air:
Honey in the comb, dripping, dropping.
And all round, in the meadows,
Among the water streams,
In and out of the shadows,
Move the red cows, cropping
The lush grass of their dreams.

The Middle Ages had no rest,
They were full of troubles.
They could not see
The shape or the pattern of things
Because of the priest-blown bubbles,
Angels' and devils' wings
Obscuring reality,
Or misting joy with pain,
Laying grey on the gold
Of the chalice and the crown,
And the deep blue of the fold.
And the hem of Saint Mary's gown.
You have burnished the gold again,

And that soft and marvellous blue;
I think you have pricked the bubbles
And the clear light shines through.

Hellas is dead now:
All those Athenian boys
Who talked with Sokrates
Grew up, grew old, and died.
And all the colour and noise
Of those great feasts of theirs,
When the Goddess was maid and bride,
Vanished. But no-one cares.
No-one will breathe the word
That calls over space and time
And brings it back to us.
Yet it seemed a whisper stirred
Among the boughs of the lime.

Oh lime tree, lime tree, how sweet are the deeps of
summer,
How quiet above thy branches the stars turning!
Ah, why must a boy grow man, grow old, be a sad late-
comer,
In the years of working and teaching and no more
learning.

IV
THE REID HACKLE

THE REID HACKLE

JANET she cam' down the burn, and down the burn
cam' she,
For to meet a Reid Hackle a' by the rowan tree:
'Oh we're awa' to-morrow morn', to Flanders in the
train,
So gie 's a kiss, my Jennie dear, till we come back
again.'

Lizzie's for the Seaforths, an' fine lads they be,
Maggie's for the Camerons, tho' I disagree,
Annie's for the Gordons – some fowks are silly –
But I'm for the Black Watch an' I'm for Willie!
Oh, nane fechts braver, an' nane fechts harder –
We're a' for the Black Watch down in Auchterarder. .

She'd left her mither to bake the scones her lane:
'Guid sakes, ma lassie! An' where were you gane?'
'Oh did ye no ken, mither, didna ye see,
The bonny Reid Hackle was waitin' for me?'

Lizzie's for the Seaforths . . . etc.

Oh, the auld Forty-second, to France it is awa',
The pipes gae skirlin' down the street, an' eh, the kilts is
brawl!

They're gane to fecht the Germans, an' trenches for to
dig,
Exceptin' some are hame on leave, an' some are left at
Nigg.

Lizzie's for the Seaforth's . . . etc.

* * *

THE WIDOW

I WHO go lonely to bed
And lonely rise,
Put on the pillow my head
And shut my eyes.

I who lie lonely in bed
See the black bars
Of windows set in lead:
Beyond, the stars.

I lie awake and hear
Bell after bell
Booming the hours clear
For me to tell.

I dream, fair things to see,
But waking weep:
No kind arm under me
While I'm asleep.

Morning comes greyly in
Across wet hills,
The thick, slow dark grows thin,
My strained heart stills.

Outside birds stir and sing,
They are not sad.
I lie remembering
Joys I have had.

My hours are long and dead
In dark or light,
I who lie lonely in bed
All through the night.

* * *

GREEN BOUGHS

MY young, dear friends are dead,
All my own generation.
Pity a youthless nation,
Pity the girls unwed,
Whose young lovers are dead.
They came from the gates of birth
To boyhood happy and strong,
To a youth of glorious days,
We give them honour and song,

And theirs, theirs is the praise.
But the old inherit the earth.
They knew what was right and wrong,
They were idealists,
Clean minds, my friends, my friends!
Artists and scientists,
Their lives that should have been long!
But everything lovely ends.
They came from college and school,
They did not falter or tire,
But the old, the stupid had rule
Over that eager nation,
And all my own generation
They have cast into the fire.

* * *

IN LONDON

IN the grey evenings, after I come home,
I draw the curtains to shut in the light;
One never knows what cruel things may roam
Through the wet cloud-banks in the hostile night.

Then, when the fire's lit and throwing wide
Streamers of flame light, dancing as I look,
And I am reading at the fire-side,
Now and again I glance across my book,

To think, if you were sitting in that chair,
Your eyes and mouth, your forehead, oh my dear,
And that red glow reflected in your hair . . .
Only you're out in Flanders, and I'm here.

* * *

‘WE HAVE NOT QUARRELLED WITH THE
GERMAN PEOPLE’ – PRES. WILSON

Do lords-and-ladies grow
In German hedges?
Does the first primrose show
On those wood edges?
Do German children go,
Laughing and bending low,
To pick the violets
From the warm ledges?

Do young beasts leap and play?
Are gardens tended?
Does the sun shine all day,
Smiling and splendid?
And, like us too, do they,
Do German people say:
‘There will be no real Spring
Till the War’s ended’?

* * *

LAMENT

GREEN graves in the Southland. My heart it is sair
For the braw lads and bonnie I'll never see mair.

The lads that ha'e lassies, the lads that ha'e nane,
In the wet o' the carses they lie by their lane.

On dune and in braeside, by muir and by burn,
Under aits o' the har'st, under roots o' the fern,

And faur down frae Scotland – oh hearts that are sair –
Lie deid lads, lie dear lads, we'll never see mair.

* *
*

SPRING 1918

THE walnut buds in April,
The apple blooms in May,
And I will tak my baby out
Under the trees to-day
And sitting there I'll say
'Next year, next year . . .'
Will the war be over
Before the sheep are shorn,
Before they cut the hay,
Before they cut the clover,
Before they cut the corn,

Or not before November
Or next year, next year?
And oh, can you remember
The times that came before?

Oh baby buds are soft, are sweet,
And baby beasts can run,
But baby boys and baby girls
Lie blinking in the sun.
Their mummies and their grannies
Have brought them in and out,
And rocked them in their cradles
And carried them about,
For months and months of war,
For daddies at the war,
In April or November.
But oh, can you remember
The times that went before?
And next year, next year . . .

V
TIME TRAVELLING

L.B.

E

THE ROAD TO ROME

THAT clear moon gives us kinder light;
The fields are grey; the dust is white.
The white road like a river lies
Stretched out and still before our eyes:
Far on through plains where darkly stand
Tall cypresses, and laurels grow,
The symbol of the conquering land.
Our Milky Way lies broad and fair,
But big, strange stars we do not know
Make patterns in this foreign air.
Deep in the North, a silver flame,
The Pole Star, pointing whence we came. . . .

* * *

AINORIX IN THE MARKET

THAT one or this one . . . that . . . and I may be
Slave to the worst . . . Now, there's a man . . .
but he
Goes by. Oh curse their sun creeping over to burn!
My head aches like hell. Won't let us turn . . .
Shining white stones of theirs that scorch our feet.
Oh my cool mountain rivers! Where they meet
Below my pines, to bathe in, back and side;
Down through dim green the silver fishes slide,

Wave on to wave. Ah Gods, the Roman sky
Blazes and blazes! And that pitiless eye,
The great sun glaring horribly – oh, my shame
To think that one of our old race and name
Should stand here, stripped and branded, bound and
sold

To any stranger for a piece of gold! . . .
There, back that same one! Back, the dark, thin head,
Deep eyes, shut mouth, and all the white and red,
That fine, bright southern stuff from neck to knee,
Fit for a king . . . So, if I stood here free,
It's him I'd choose to speak to, to say, friend,
I am here alone in your strange town, so lend
Me hearth and guest-right . . . Oh, but I hate them all,
All, all the same! Romans and dogs, I call
Famine and plague and vengeance for our dead
On you, on you! Sun, rain the blood they shed! . . .
My Gods are beaten too . . . He's gone away . . .
If I could only die and end to-day,
Death and long sleep, and freedom, and no pain,
Cool, cool, no body . . . Now he's back again,
Staring . . . oh, am I a man or a beast for show!
Their hands, their hands – oh Gods – oh – I won't go! . . .
So, I am his. To bow before his eye.
His slave. Well, he shall see. You friends, goodbye.

* * *

BARBARIANS IN ROME

O^H, all the winds that ever blow
To-night they meet in Rome;
And each one dreams of light that gleams
About a distant home,
Oh far and far from Rome;
Then each one dreams of silver streams
That glint around his home.

The wind brings back the open grass
That fronts the mud-walled town;
The wind brings back the sheep-trod track
Across the scented down
Above the little town;
The wind brings back the fires they stack,
The beacons on the down.

Once more the sacking of the coast,
The shining ship's array,
The sweeping sail by peak and rail,
The fighting in the bay,
And so at last away,
The ship-mate's hail across the gale,
The bride's hair wet with spray.

The desert piling high with sand,
The babies in the sun,
Where row by row, as brown seeds sow

The boughs drop one by one,
Those children of the sun –
There, row by row, the date-palms grow
That ripen over one.

Oh, all the winds that ever blew
To-night they meet in Rome;
And each man dreams of light that gleams
About a distant home,
Oh far and far from Rome;
Then each man dreams of silver streams
That glint around his home . . .

* *
 *

THE STRANGER IN THE TEMPLE

ALL the Folk, praying faintly in thick darkness,
Heard the last bleating of the sacrifice;
The temple was filled with thunder and choked thin
cries.

There they sang Glory, Glory, for the world that is their
world,
Till the song's echo from the roof-beams, the black,
fretted roof-beams,
The roof-beams carven well with climbing beasts, was
hurled.

I alone of all the Folk there kneeling
Joined not that song, unjoyful through that joy,
When every man was crowned with terrible flowers,
Thick-scented lilies for those blood filled hours,
Red, honeyed lilies on heads of man and boy.

They think not, the Folk, that I am a stranger yet,
And while I am living and strong there can be no amends;
Aye, though I have broken their bread, yet I can never
forget
How they took me by force from my own country and
friends!

One day I will rise up, and over-throwing
Their Gods and temples, will kill them all in a night:
Yet not to-morrow, nor to-morrow's morrow,
But when I am grown up to my full strength and height!
At one time they will have joy, but at the next time
sorrow
When I am grown, and when my right is my might.

There was a smell of blood all through the temple,
And the priests flitted round with their long, red knives,
And the Folk were glad in that wail of departing lives.

* * *

THE TORCHES OF MITHRAS

IN uplands ploughing
With the east wind soughing
Over thorn trees bowing,
And the light waning
And the oxen straining
And the rooks complaining,
Far furrows meeting
When the day's fleeting:
There comes no morrow
But the same sorrow
For all good things gone.

But day dawn nearing
And thine appearing,
Thou Light unfearing!
Calls hope to waken
From faith unshaken,
Heart unforsaken:
Oh Sun upleaping
From night's dark keeping,
This is the morrow –
No doubt nor sorrow,
Since thou, God, art come!

* * *

VERCINGETORIX IN ALESIA

O H, be quiet. You shall not turn me,
Water will not drown me, fire will not burn me,
With my purpose set and all before me.
You, my brothers, to-day you saw me
Among our folk in the thick of battle
Driving spears at the Roman cattle:
They are all round me, they are too strong for me,
Towns and peoples have suffered long for me:
Burning, breaking, wounding and slaying,
Terror and torture past all saying.
I have brought you war, but peace I will bring you
Though now the Roman armies ring you.
Yet you shall live and yet go free,
And on my head the vengeance be!

You shall not follow me longer, there's nothing more
to say.
I thought the end would be never: the end has come
to-day.
I thought to fight and to win, and to set my country free,
I thought to drive the legions. But they have driven me.
And walls are shattered and burnt, and oh, deep are the
graves:
The men that I led to battle are killed and broken and
slaves.

All no use, no use. The city too must fall.
I must give up my city, and I must give up Gaul.
All this fighting and all this planning
End. And I, who was dawn wind fanning
Flame from ashes that will be cold,
Give you myself as a pledge to hold.
You are to take me, you must use me;
He will listen and not refuse me.
You are to give me to all that waits me;
He will be gentle because he hates me.
I who have known this Cæsar, I say what you must do:
Go and be humble to him – he will build your houses
new!

I take my sword and my armour. This is the last time.
To-morrow I shall be gone, my name no more than a
rhyme
In the mouth of your child, playing: or dark in the
thought of a slave
Who hates me in some far city, though once he was mine
and brave.
Oh my beautiful life that has been too quick to go!
I never saw this ending. But yet it is good I know,
When my dead rot on the ground, and my Gods are
asleep above,
Another way than fighting to save the things that I love.

* * *

AN ARVERNIAN LOOKS AT THE SACRED
MOUNTAIN AND REMEMBERS
VERCINGETORIX

‘IN the evening the clouds gather:
Oh high, oh far-off one.

Who is there walking this hour in the grey,
Are they gone from thee, the Gods of my country?
Is it Rome holds thee now?

And we living below here in the plain,
And broken our city into black ruin!

Ariu, my hero!

The clouds have gathered over thy head.’

VI

PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG GIRL
GROWING UP

SITTING OUT

THE Chinese lanterns in broad day
Like orange ghosts show faint and strange,
We feel the throb of dancing feet,
The distant music's halt and change.
I thought I heard – did you not hear? –
Piercing the golden violins,
A foreman's whistle, sharp and clear:
They go to work: did you not hear?

The dancers stream across the grass,
The morning wind lifts up their hair;
The music deadens heart and brain,
They do not know, they would not care.
Surely you heard, as we sat here –
It pierced right through the violins –
That foreman's whistle, shrill and clear?
They go to work: and we sit here.

We should not come outside and flaunt
Bare necks and shoulders to the sun;
Our dresses look so hot and crushed,
We should have gone when night was done!
A moment past – too near, too near –
It pierced the singing violins,
That foreman's whistle, fierce and clear!
They go to work: with us so near.

THE PROPOSAL

OH please, you're hurting me! Oh, let me go!
You mustn't, mustn't, mustn't, kiss me so!
Don't touch me for a moment – can't you see –
Your lips: so hot – your fingers: burning me?
Why should this happen? We were such good
friends!

(When a thing's perfect, then of course it ends.)
You, when we talked, our History, Science, Greats,
Gibbon, and Italy, and City States;
You, when we planned beside the school-room fire
Reforms and Governments and Empire;
You, like another brother, you, so kind,
What talks and walks we've had! Well, never mind,
Only you've spoilt it all . . . Oh, I must go
Out of these pines, up-hill, to where winds blow
And I can breathe. Yes, let's go hand in hand;
That's friends – not *this*. Oh, do you understand?
It's not just kissing, but – well, I was free,
You were free – friends! then you caught hold of
me

Suddenly, and you said – like that – my name.
And the world never can be quite the same.
Then there's another thing that I can't tell:
Will all my other friendships change as well?
Will they think differently of me now

Because I'm – yours? One never does know how
These things work out. And, oh, it's not a bit
Like any book or poem talks of it! . . .

* * *

AUTUMN

THO-NIGHT, if I was free, I'd go
Out of the house, into the rain,
Because the clock ticks here so slow,
Down to the station – to a train,
And get somewhere, away, away.
Oh anything, but not to stay
In this same place day after day
And from the school-room windows see
The branches of the walnut sway
Across the garden: oh dear me,
If only I could get away!

* * *

STORM AT NIGHT

IF I drew the curtain now
I should see
Hissing bough and tossing bough
Of the windy walnut tree;
I should see
Flying clouds across the moon.

But the storm will blow away
Very soon,
And the tired tree will rest
All its leaves, till, east and west,
Comes the day.

* * *

PROTHALAMION

A MAN has come to the town,
His be no common praise:
Put on your choicest gown
And strew about his ways
Myrtle, laurel and bays!

His eyes are as deep and brown
As a mountain burn in the heat
Of the still mid-summer days.

His skin is as cool and sweet
As the firm ruddy plums one sees
In the grass under orchard trees.

His hands are as kind and strong
As a beech tree sheltering
When the storms are loud and long.

But oh, if I could sing
Of the thoughts that swarm in his head,
Of how the quick mind grew,

And, all his body through,
Where the hot blood leaps red,
The Will that governs the whole!

But I am covered with shame,
(Like the rash man who stole
Leonardo's Lady that smiles
Out of her gilded frame,
And ran with her miles and miles,
But never could gaze his fill)
And so my two eyes shine
And my heart cannot be still,
Because this man is mine!

* *

*

TORQUATA PARVULA

THE trees stand bare in the sun,
The ground is pitted and hard,
The shadows are white with frost:
The cold will make you run,
The field gate swings unbarred,
Nothing you do is lost!

There is no wind to-day,
The catkins sleep in the hollow,
The berries are bright as paint:

But oh, you must not stay,
There are miles and miles to follow,
And you will never be faint!

On the tip of the alder twigs,
The ice-blobs dip in the river
That runs too quick to freeze:
And if there were broken brigs,
Then I might stop and shiver,
But you would leap and seize
The branch that's hanging over,
And up the hill and away!
Farewell, my bold little rover,
Off and away . . .

VII

THINGS, IMAGES, AND POLITICS

ON TAKING A T'ANG HORSE FROM
HAMMERSMITH TO THE CITY

YOUR stiff clay form
Rests heavily on my knees,
And my hands are cold, clasping
Your neck and hard legs.
I am become a Goddess,
Made by a potter,
Holding a horse in her hands.
Your shapes have grown into my mind,
My body feels them
And takes them for its own.

* * *

THE POOR BRIDE

UNDER the gas that purred and flickered dim
She knelt, she packed her box to go,
Folded her blouses neat to go with him;
She smoothed, she flattened out a bow,
And wondered if that little darn would show.

She wished her night-gowns could be trimmed with lace;
One can't have everything, she thought,
And, looking in the mirror at her face,
Smiled at herself, and caught
Back a brown hair-wisp; but the time was short,

And she had still to clean her wedding shoes;
And she must get some sleep to-night:
To-morrow night – but there, nothing to lose
Really, and all to gain: but white
She sat and shook under that yellow light.

Then pinched herself with her yet ring-less hand:
It was – was – nice to be a bride!
It would be fine – oh, she was sure – to stand
Front of the parson, him beside,
And it was silly of her to have cried!

She strapped her box. She'd have, if she was rich,
Such lovely clothes, she must confess,
Such silks and sables! And not have to stitch
All her free time for one new dress.
But some girls have to do with even less.

She'd just herself to bring him, and she knew
That this was all he wanted. Yet
She would have liked if all her things were new!
Only they weren't. No use to fret.
But all her pillow with her tears grew wet.

* * *

FORBIDDEN

Do not come, do not come.
The fields, the hedges are dumb.
Bare elms their tossed heads rear,
There is no place for you here.
The cows forget you; they go
Walking in their gentle way
By the poplars in a row;
They do not think of you. The hay
That we stacked is done to-day.
Hens forget, as they forget
An hour after, the eggs they lay.
By the thorn where first we met
The black sow and her spotty pigs
Grunt and root. Old John is dead,
And Bill Adams comes and digs
Turnips: one you didn't know.
Next year I shan't sow
Flowers – let the garden grow
Good potatoes, onions, greens.
Do you remember the pear that leans
Sideways over the orchard wall?
I am going to cut it down,
Because you sat in the grass below
When the pears were soft and brown.
There you used to watch them fall,

Something over a year ago.
Now the beasts, the fields, are dumb,
I am dumb.
And you shall never come.

* * *

TWO MEN AND A GIRL

THE man who sits on the gate
Is full of anger and hate
For the brown girl who passes,
And the boy walking beside her.
He sits there like a spider
Among the green grasses.

The boy by the brown girl's side
With eyes of innocent pride
Looks at his sweetheart only,
Dearer each day and fairer,
And dreams of her, future sharer
Of a cottage no longer lonely.

And the brown girl likes the two,
Her old love and her new,
To meet; she giggles and throws her
Head back, fidgets and minces,
And sees how the one man winces
While the other squeezes her closer!

INTOLERANCE

SINCE in this country we are caged,
Where every one is middle-aged,
Where no one's more than half alive
And tending to be forty-five,
Let *us* grow up and settle down
And compromise and tolerate
And never love and never hate,
Nor fight the follies of the State,
Nor scorn the vices of the town.
Away with visions! Let's be wise,
And go to church, economize,
Let us make speeches, buy and sell,
Let us be middle-aged as well!



THE LEADER

How will you move them? By what power?
The aptitude to catch the hour,
The virtue of the thing said loud,
Or the brute-soul that shakes the crowd?
Or by some safer, subtler way:
You have to watch it every day,
But, people being what they are,
Suggestion seldom goes too far.

It's a good game. You keep the rules;
Don't let them think you know they're fools;
The Ars Politica's not hard
(With certain subjects safely barred).

Oh, see them waiting, tiers on tiers,
Constituents with open ears;
You'll find they listen half the day
To anything you choose to say.
We know you'll do it – to our shame –
The same old, dear old, bad old game!

* * *

P E A C E

TALL in your sunlit acres,
Quiet among your trees,
Or cool and calm in your garden
When summer scatters the bees.

In your high, white-walled parlours
There breathes no echo of song,
But dim through the folded curtains
The day, drifting along.

Ploughing, sowing and reaping,
And over the fertile ground
From harvest on into harvest
The seasons following round.

You will die unremembered,
But your land will not die,
And still shall be red wheat stretching
Between a sky and a sky.

* * *

THREE LAMBS

*To the butcher of Spoleto, and also to the memory of General
Garibaldi, who went out at night and rescued a young lamb
which was lost.*

THERE were three lambs in a meadow all the day,
(Italia! Honore d'Italia!)
They were so little that they could scarcely play.
(Evviva l'Italia moderna.)

The farmer loaded his market cart,
The farmer's wife was ready to start.

The cart was painted yellow and blue,
He'd fine tomatoes, and peaches too;

Melons, marrows, nuts in a sack;
The farmer's horse had a sore on its back.
(Evviva l'honore d'Italia.)

He tied some ducks by their yellow feet,
And shoved them in well under the seat.

He looked at his maize to count the yield.
Then he thought of the lambs in the field . . .

He tied two, and his wife the other,
The lambs were bleating to call their mother.
(Evviva l'honore d'Italia.)

The withies began to chafe and pull
Their little soft legs all covered with wool,

The willow withies knotted tight:
Three small lambs in a bundle white.
(Evviva l'honore d'Italia.)

Off they jolted and down the road,
The shrinking horse and his tumbled load.

The sky was hot as an oven door;
Their mouths were parched and their eyes were sore,

One to another the lambs' thin bleat,
And the gasping ducks in the dust and heat.
(Evviva l'honore d'Italia.)

At last they came to the market square
And the knock-kneed horse stood drooping there.

All the stalls so jolly and gay,
(Il buono contadino!)
Day of a saint and market day.
(I santi di Spoleto!)

The butcher bargained, the farmer swore
That no such lambs had been seen before.

His wife was looking for pins and lace,
She shook the lambs in the butcher's face.

Half an hour the bargain took,
With all the market stopping to look,
And pull, and poke, and handle all round
Three little lambs on the stony ground.
(Evviva l'honore d'Italia.)

The butcher shoved them under his stall,
Sure that day he could sell them all.

They moved their sad little heads where they lay,
But nobody gave them drink or hay.

Their feet still tied and their bodies slack:
One of the lambs had hurt its back.

The butcher's stall was the place for flies,
(Italia! Italia moderna!)
Crawling into their ears and eyes.
(Evviva l'honore d'Italia.)

Out of the church came two fat priests,
(Santissima Madre di Dio !)
Nobody cares what happens to beasts.
(Evviva Cristo Italianissimo!)

By came a Fascist in a black shirt,
(Viva il Fascio Spoletino!)
With more to do than look in the dirt!
(Morte al Socialismo!)

By came an Englishman in a straw hat,
(Evviva l'Italia moderna.)
'Why do you treat little lambs like that?'
(*'Dove la Sua carità?'*)

When they had watched him talk some more,
They said: 'this is what lambs are for:'

'They will be tender boiled or fried . . .'
So the lambs stayed with their feet tied.
(Evviva l'honore d'Italia.)

All the morning the square was filled,
(I buoni contadini!)
And one of the lambs was bought and killed.

They bent its head and they cut well through,
The blood fell hot on the other two.

The next was bought in the afternoon;
One could see by its looks it was none too soon.

It struggled hard when it saw the knife,
Poor little thing so fond of life!

The back-hurt lamb was the last to die,
It lay there limp with a glazing eye:

Not so easy at all to sell.

But it went, in time, to the best hotel.

(Evviva l'Italia moderna.)

It was stewed with herbs in the nicest way,
And the Englishman had some next day.

(I ricci forestieri . . .)

* *
 *

TOO LATE

YOU come too late,
You with your Revolution.
Here we like Evolution
And Devolution,
Not that harsh R!
You, boy! How high you rate
Your little brains,
You that would mar
The peaceful promise of our middle age,
Now we have done, at last, with growing pains:
Break up the cage,
The golden cage on which we whet our beaks,
Not beat our wings!
Curses and shrieks –
You rage.

To us, each season brings
Content. Enough. We hate
Those who destroy our things,
Our ways. You come too late.

VIII

SOMEWHERE IN MY MIND

SOMEWHERE IN MY MIND

SOMEWHERE in my mind
A seed has been sown.
It lies there blind,
All blind and little
And hidden and alone.

A phrase out of a book,
Or a friend talking:
A tree in blossom
Where I had chanced to look
On a hill-side walking.

Perhaps it will lie
A seed sleeping ever,
Die when I die,
And come to form
And its own life never.

Maybe I shall find,
After a long time,
The seed has rooted
And filled my mind
With pattern and rhyme.

Then piece by piece
I must drag to air,

Nor fail nor cease
From my thought-digging
Until the thing is there.

Until fine and steady
And now fully grown,
It blooms for others.
And my mind is ready
For a new seed to be sown.

* *

*

THE GARDENS

IN obscure gardens by the lonely sea,
Hedged in with tamarisk and rosemary,
Pale girls pace up and down the sanded grass,
Before each stone and bush pass and repass,
Sighing for lovers, but the red suns set,
And they indoors, a dreamless sleep to get.

Yet when the stars are white, colours effaced,
Once more the shaded paths, the lawns, are paced,
But now by youths, ah, not less pale than they,
The girls, who walked there waiting every day.
And high above them, rows of windows wide
But dumb and sightless, face towards the tide

That frets and murmurs at the garden gates,
And under every one a youth that waits,
Voicelessly pleading under circling stars.
But no girls ever come to lift the window bars.

* * *

THE MIRROR AND THE CLOCK

LET the heat tingle
Through the heart and head of me,
Till I forget
All that they said of me;

Till the fire burns brighter
And the logs glow cheerier,
Till the light turns merrier
As the dark grows drearier;

Till the claw-legged tables
Come out and walk to me,
And the sliding mirror
Take heart to talk to me:

Unknown existence
Our life is skirted by,
The only friends
I am not deserted by.

I used to hate them
When they stood listening
Queer-eyed in corners,
By gas-light glistening.

But now we join
In a great alliance,
Against the world
I can cry defiance.

The sleek, bright mirror,
Mincing and bridling,
The chairs and sofa,
Purring and sidling!

Their brass glints brightly,
Their varnish goldenly,
They laugh and flatter,
So to embolden me.

When I am brave enough
Then I will burn again
For thoughts and struggles;
Back I will turn again!

But now I will sit
To the wise clock harkening,
While the light goes out
And the night is darkening.

TIME

I WISH I could store up time
Sometimes when I'm so bored,
Nothing to write or rhyme,
All my thoughts explored,
Or people come to tea –
I don't like them, nor they me –
Oh if it could be stored!
If I could net the minutes
As men net larks and linnets;
But they take wing, take wing,
Each moment after his brother;
But if I could save time from one thing
To spend it on another!
Over the clock's the steeple,
And under the clock's the yew,
And oh, if I could take time from other people,
And give it to you!

* * *

I HAVE GOTTEN CLAY

I HAVE gotten clay
To make me images.
I cannot make them!
I cannot say

'They should be thus-wise
In form and line,
And then I bake them.'
The things I fashion
They are not splendid,
But all ungainly
And unintended.
Yet they are mine,
I will not break them;
The things I made,
And made with passion,
Shall not be ended!

IX
SONGS

SONG OF THE GUARD ON THE SNOW-LINE

FROM SAUNES BAIROS: A PLAY

(*To the Memory of G. K. Boswell*)

THE river lieth far below,
The fields slope down towards the river,
And in the fields the people go,
Oh far below, and far below,
And touch the snow-line never.

And in the fields the houses are,
And there are towns beside the river;
Below, the houses lie so far,
And in the houses people are
Who touch the snow-line never.

And from the houses pastures run
That slope beside the upper river,
Green mountain pastures in the sun,
And up the pastures children run,
But touch the snow-line never.

Above the pastures pine-woods lie
Round the bright fountains of the river,
And in the woods the trees grow high,
And neath the pine boughs lovers lie,
Yet touch the snow-line never.

Above the pine-woods birches stand
That look down always on the river,
Lean birches, white on every hand,
And in the birch the snow-guard stand,
Nor touch the snow-line ever.

* * *

GARRY FAIRIES

UP the Garry, where the Garry narrows
To a brown burn, and, like silver arrows,
The trout dance, glancing through the narrow shallows,
All the fairies that the Garry hallows,
The Garry fairies – when the crofter, sleeping,
Dreams of his sheep – go lightly, laughing, leaping,
Under berried rowans rushing, peeping,
Run on the ripples, where the ripples babble,
And round the smooth stones dip and dance and dabble.

* * *

SUNDAY MORNING

THE bells in the steeple
Are calling good people
To church in the morning
When bright shines the sun,
On green leaves adorning
The trees every one.

They call them in, warning,
To psalm and to prayer
And out of the morning
And out of the air.
I hear the bells ringing,
But clear through the morning
The thrushes are singing
And mating and scorning
The church and the dim
Dusty aisle and the vicar
Who gives out the hymn!
But church-gatewards quicker
The people are streaming
Dressed all in their best:
Of what are they dreaming,
To go there to-day?
Oh see what they're leaving,
The thrush who is weaving
In may-bush her nest
Of sweet-scented hay,
And singing, not grieving
For sins, or imploring
God's blessing or pardon,
But robbing the garden
And never deploring
The theft, nor restoring,
Oh come, come away!
Where leaves are a-quiver

Not far is to search,
So come up the river
And leave them in church.

* *

*

MAGIC OF THINGS

THERE is some magic in words,
Heavy birds that cuddle
Down on a chilled heart;
Into each pinched, empty part
They murmur and huddle.

There is some magic in looks
No books have told of:
When nothing else is sure
To make shy love secure,
This to take hold of.

There is some magic in touch,
Ah, too much to tell you.
My dear, if you were I,
I you, then by and bye
How sweetly I'd enspell you!







KS-320-289